

***“Take up and Read” – Is Augustine’s Path to Faith Still Effective Today?
Discerning the Link Between Biblical Literacy and Faith Development***

A Paper Presented at the ACTS Ministry Lift Conference

September 27/28, 2013

Larry Perkins, Ph.D.,

Director, Northwest Centre for Biblical and Theological Literacy

Biblicalliteracy.nbseminary.ca

Moments.nbseminary.com

Late in the summer of 386 Augustine was sitting in a garden in Milan and by chance he heard a child chanting: “Take it and read it; take it and read it.” He picked up what was nearby, Paul’s Letter to the Romans, and began reading Romans 13:13–14, “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ...” His conversion to Christianity from paganism and Manichaeism ensued. At the eve of Easter in 388, Ambrose, his mentor, baptized him. Without doubt biblical literacy played a significant part in Augustine’s conversion. Augustine’s spiritual experience was replicated countless times in human history.

Does this relationship between biblical text and spiritual transformation still hold true today? Does biblical literacy still remain an essential strategy for churches to use in evangelism and developing the spiritual life of believers? Does a high level of biblical and theological literacy correlate with a healthy, sustainable church? How does the teaching responsibility of a local church relate to biblical and theological literacy? While most of us would respond positively to these questions, I think the reality in many local church communities tells a different story.

In this workshop I try to make the case that the re-discovery of biblical and theological literacy, i.e. Gospel literacy as a key to discipleship, forms an essential element in building healthy, vigorous, sustainable church communities. Although in this presentation the focus is on biblical literacy, the principles apply, in my opinion, to theological literacy as well. Both biblical and theological literacy generate Gospel literacy. ***Where the people of God possess highly-developed biblical literacy, there you have vibrant, sustainable, orthodox kingdom life.*** They stand strong for Christ in the face of suffering, false-teaching, and cultural enticement.

Definition

Biblical Literacy in its basic essence is *understanding how to read the Bible and reading the Bible with understanding*. Fleshing out this definition we might say that it is motivating people and developing their capacity to read the Bible with sufficient understanding so that they can explain its basic meaning and apply that meaning to generate life-changing conversion, discipleship and community. Such individuals will have sufficient knowledge and skill to use resources that enable them to discern the basic meaning of a biblical text. It includes the ability to apply this discerned meaning, i.e. biblical wisdom, to contemporary life. Biblical Literacy is a means to an end, the end being conversion and mature, effective discipleship lived in community. It has a personal and corporate dimension, relates both to evangelism¹ and discipleship and is a primary mode of worship.

Some regard the term “literacy” as different from biblical “understanding.” The term “literacy” suggests biblical knowledge without spiritual discernment or application, a kind of grand Bible trivia by which people amass knowledge of biblical events, persons and ideas, but have no commitment to their truth or any intention of applying this truth personally or culturally. This is not how I am using or understanding this term. **“Literacy” defines the capacity to read a text with sufficient understanding to grasp its meaning and thus have the opportunity to interact with the truth of that meaning.**

¹ Consider the mission of Gideons International: “ Our vision is to reach our communities for Christ and to enable God’s Word to be placed and at work in every country of the world, so that every person has ready access to God’s Word, that they may come to know Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and Lord.”

<http://www.gideons.ca/Aboutthegideons/Mission>. They articulate a close connection between biblical literacy and evangelism.

Scripture Union International states its aim to be:

Working with the churches, Scripture Union aims to:

- a) make God’s Good News known to children, young people and families, and
- b) encourage people of all ages to meet God daily through the Bible and prayer, so that they may come to personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, grow in Christian Maturity and become both committed church members and servants of a world in need.

<http://su-international.org/about-us/aims-belief-and-working-principles/>.

Consider also the mandate that CANIL has a key agent in promoting Bible translation and literacy.

Today we have many different means to develop such biblical literacy, including listening to scripture or reading Scripture on an Ipad, video games, dramatizations, memorizing Scripture and reflecting upon it, physically using a print edition of Scripture to read its content, hearing Scripture expounded in preaching or some other teaching context, etc. These are not mutually exclusive because individuals often will interact with the biblical text in a variety of ways, which may change over time.

Encouragements to Biblical Literacy in the NT

1. God's Spirit worked historically within selected humans to provide us with Holy Scripture – giving this divine project centrality in the development of the people of God. He invests in biblical literacy directly. Believers respect and honour God's actions in giving us his revelation by developing biblical literacy. This is not “bibliolatry” as some contend, but rather giving attention to the resources that God himself has provided. Refusing to engage it directly or being satisfied just to access it second hand, i.e. through what others may communicate, seems to fall short of a yearning for God, i.e. the “wordy milk” as Peter describes it (1 Peter 2:1-3), whether in oral or written form. Peter builds his command on the previous metaphor that identifies believers as those born again through “incorruptible seed” namely the “living word of God.” This perspective resonates with torah-centredness, being the “people of the word,” which defines Judaism.
2. NT writers generally include numerous quotations and allusions to the Jewish Scriptures in the letters or Gospels. This only makes sense if their audiences were accessing Jewish Scriptures either orally or in writing. The incorporation of such texts becomes a means by which these early church leaders develop the capacity of Christians to interpret the Jewish Scriptures Christianly, i.e. with Jesus as the hermeneutical key. It also validates these Scriptures as being “God's Word.”
3. We find many encouragements in NT writings to read Scripture – which at that time were the Jewish Scriptures. The example of Jesus and his knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures gives additional mandate for this. In his teaching these are “the words of eternal life.” Perhaps Matthew in 13:51-52 speaks to this as he describes Jesus' followers as “scribes who have been disciplined/taught with respect to the kingdom of heaven” and who have the ability “to draw from his treasury new and old things,” i.e. the ability to read, understand, reflect and then live obediently to Jesus' teachings. Discipleship is linked with ‘scribal’ activity, i.e. the ability to read, interpret and write.

4. The very language that Jesus used to describe his followers, i.e. μαθητῆς (disciple) and ἀπόστολος (delegated representative) – imply serious attention to learning so that one can be a capable, faithful representative. Such learning focused initially in Jesus’ mission, but soon expanded after his ascension and as the mission of the church spreads so does its development and use of text-based media under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Within church tradition the gospels are produced by apostles or those closely connected with them. Luke’s language in Luke 1:2-3 indicates he had access to “those eyewitness and servants of the word who transmitted this information.
5. We know from Jesus’ final great command in Matthew 28:19-20 that teaching is central to disciple-making. This requires at least oral exchange of information, with emphasis upon life-transformation, i.e. “obeying all that I commanded,” but also includes as appropriate and helpful text-based study and interaction. The ἐπίσκοποι (overseers) were to have the capacity to teach (1 Timothy 3:2) and the διάκονοι (serving agents) were to be fully conversant with “the mysteries of the faith” (1 Timothy 3:9).
6. Paul urges his protégé Timothy to read the scriptures and to teach them (1 Timothy 4:11-12, 13; 5:17). He needs to develop the capacity to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Timothy’s own education includes “the holy writings” (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Literacy in the first century was less than universal. Estimates range from 10 – 25% of the population. Additionally manuscripts were expensive and not everyone could afford to purchase them. In various religious communities there was expectation of literacy among key leaders because they used texts to transmit their teachings and traditions, particularly within Judaism, e.g. the Qumran community. The “scribal guild” generally maintained this ability and would be using it personally and collectively. Note how Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-5 uses terminology that describes the transmission of tradition in reference to his proclamation of the Gospel.

We might ask to what extent reading was a necessary skill for elders – able to teach, able to explain the mystery of the faith. Is Timothy exceptional in this matter or the norm? If Paul is writing letters to churches, presumably he expects the leaders, in large measure, to be able to read them personally and then to the congregations. There is the synagogue practice, which seems to be developing in the first century A.D. of reading scriptures during Sabbath services, e.g. Jesus in Nazareth (Luke 4). Consider also Paul’s instructions in Colossians 4:16 regarding the reading of his letter.

Paul seems to have access to biblical manuscripts according to 2 Timothy 4:13 τὸν φαιλόνην ὄν ἀπέλιπον ἐν Τρωάδι παρὰ Κάρπῳ ἐρχόμενος φέρε, καὶ τὰ βιβλία, μάλιστα τὰς μεμβράνας (“when you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and my scrolls, especially the parchments.”). The τὰ βιβλία would refer to papyri worked either into rolls or small codices for note-taking. The τὰς μεμβράνας refer to parchment documents. Parchment was the more expensive material. It is unclear whether Paul refers to parts of Scripture or notebooks that contain his reflections or copies of his letters. What is clear is Paul’s literacy and use of text materials for his own edification and ministry advancement.

Lastly, just a brief mention of the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch, whom Philip discovers reading the book of Isaiah. Was this a Greek translation or Hebrew version? He reads it out loud (Acts 8:30 προσδραμὼν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος Ἡσαΐαν τὸν προφήτην,...; “Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet.”). Philip is concerned about whether this man “knows” what he is reading. What about Philip’s ability to interpret it? Luke writes that “beginning with this writing he proclaimed the good news about Jesus to him.” Did he have the ability to read it? It seems so and he was familiar with other texts as well. What about Stephen and his ability to debate the Scriptures? Consider the degree to which OT texts are woven into his defense speech delivered before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7).

The leadership at least in the early church for the most part seems to be literate and could access Jewish Scriptural texts for their own study as well as congregational reading and instruction (whether these materials were in Hebrew or available in Greek translation probably varied from context to context). Much of the congregational meeting time seems to be devoted to the oral reading of these texts and their explanation, as well as other correspondence from early Christian leaders (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16 and his description of Paul’s letters). It does not take long for “commentaries” to begin to emerge based upon these texts.

What Bible would they read?

The sacred scriptures were Jewish scriptures. These were available in Hebrew and Greek, both of which would be regarded as sufficient to access God’s revelation. The Messianic movement was a Jewish movement and “searching the scriptures” was a common Jewish means for discerning direction for the community as well as individuals. In the majority of cases the NT quotations from the OT reflect the Old Greek Translation.

Luke tells in his prologue that “many had undertaken to prepare a ‘narrative account’ about Jesus and his message (ἐπειδήπερ πολλοὶ ἐπεχείρησαν ἀνατάξασθαι διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων,...). Such accounts were summaries of things reported by eye-witnesses and servants of the word. The preparation of written accounts, whatever they contained as the predecessors of what we call Gospels, by itself witnesses to the need for text-based materials to sustain the ministry and growth of the early church.

Only in the late first century would some Christian documents begin to be regarded as Scripture. Note again 2 Peter 3:15-16 and its comments about Paul’s letters. Consider also Matthew’s incorporation of Mark’s material within his Gospel.

Certainly orality was a primary means to access Jesus traditions (cf. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11, 15; Peter’s proclamation to Cornelius in Acts 10). The speeches which Luke provides in Acts give witness to this method of communicating the good news. Paul’s letters frequently reference prior oral presentations he made to the people who were in his audience (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2).

The function of Biblical literacy as an important adjunct for spiritual maturity.

It seems that both oral and text-based instruction occurs in the early church – as we would expect. Although oral presentation probably was more frequent initially, given the incipient nature of the Christian movement, the importance of text for teaching, particularly as an authorized source about the traditions, soon emerges within the pages of the NT. The emphasis upon teaching as an integral part of worship shows the concern to transfer biblical wisdom from text to life, creating thereby faith communities.

I have sought to demonstrate briefly the connection between teaching, whether based upon oral tradition or texts, literacy, and the “making of disciples.” There is no discipleship without some knowledge of the traditions about Jesus, however they might be obtained. Some degree of “biblical literacy” was foundational for becoming and remaining a Jesus follower. Paul’s instructions to Timothy intimately show knowledge of these traditions and how significant their reading in the faith community was to his spiritual leadership, as well as his own spiritual development (cf. 2 Tim. 3:14-17). How do we understand the process by which a disciple of Jesus develops spiritual maturity? What role should biblical literacy play in such development? If access to biblical text and the capacity to understand are not developed, what level of spiritual

maturity is possible for such disciples within 21st century western culture? How will believers be able to contextualize their new faith within their network of relationships?

We see in the NT the influence of other believers as witnesses and mentors – but they use their own understanding of the traditions about Jesus as well as portions of the Jewish Scriptures and emerging early church writings in these activities.

The role of the Holy Spirit in such practices is recognized by Paul in Romans 12:7 (teaching); 1 Corinthians 12:28 (teachers); and 1 Peter 4:11. The Holy Spirit uses knowledge of Jesus expressed in Scripture and oral teaching to conform people in the early church to the image of Christ (cf. John 16:12-15 where the Spirit is said to lead/guide into all truth).

The final commandment of Jesus links “teaching everything he commanded” with the formation of disciples. I would suggest that Paul is reflecting upon this in Ephesians 4:20-21 where he declares that Jesus followers have “learned/studied/learned as disciples the Messiah” (ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν). This happens because “you have heard him and have been taught in him” (αὐτὸν ἠκούσατε καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἐδιδάχθητε). The truth resides in Jesus.

I think Paul and the other early church leaders understood the connection between biblical literacy (however this might be acquired and including the traditions about Jesus) and mature discipleship and Christian leadership. Instead of following “deceptive fables” or the “teachings of demons” as Paul discusses in 1 Timothy, these believers comprehend the framework of biblical truth, have deep loyalty to Christ and his mission, and know what it means to be God’s people in this world.

The State of Biblical Literacy in Evangelical Churches in Western Canada in 2013.

If the New Testament argues for the connection between initial and maturing discipleship and biblical/Gospel literacy, then does the Evangelical Church in Western Canada embrace this and demonstrate its continued support of biblical literacy as a significant and necessary building block or stepping stone to discipleship? I think by and large most Christian leaders would embrace biblical literacy as a motherhood issue and assume that people in their congregations are developing high levels of literacy and thus advancing in their spiritual maturity. But is this the case?

One small indicator is expressed in the executive summary of “Hemorrhaging Faith” by Rick Hiemstra of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. When parents tended to model Bible Reading, i.e. valued the importance of biblical literacy in some fashion, then this tended to be valued by their children (54% of young adults from such families continue to read their Bibles at least weekly). Where parents only did this moderately or occasionally, the percentage of young adults attending church who are reading their Bibles drops to 7% and 4% respectively. What kind of discipleship then is being demonstrated in such cases? In a Faith Today article reflecting on this report Jeremy Postal urges church leaders:

Engage Scripture: The active and systematic exploration of Scripture promotes Jesus, His Kingdom and its values. Young adults given the opportunity to dialogue with Scripture themselves find the meta-story of Scripture attractive. Careful teaching and understanding are crucial. (Faith Today, September 2012, p. 24)

The supposition is that this is not happening enough and this omission results in young adults leaving the church. Biblical literacy, i.e. engaging the Scriptures with understanding, becomes a critical strategy in developing and sustaining discipleship among young adults.

Perhaps the heartbeat of Wycliffe as he struggled to translate the Scriptures into English and disseminate these copies throughout England no longer throbs at the centre of our discipleship: to enable the ploughboy to read the Bible in his own language and thus take some responsibility for his spiritual growth.

Statistics indicate that perhaps 3% of young people in Evangelical churches may spend a year at a Bible College or Institute. Even fewer attend Christian universities in Canada where they can access courses in biblical studies. In such cases however the model of biblical study tends to follow that of Religious Studies – studying about the Bible, but not necessarily seeing it as a life map whose values should transform student lives. If youth attend a church program, at the most they might be exposed to 30 minutes a week of Bible teaching. Some congregational traditions still follow a catechism process, but to what degree this builds biblical literacy with a yearning to study God’s word personally is a debated question.

When it comes to adults, I would venture to say that the trends are not encouraging. Few churches offer “adult electives” for the purpose of teaching. When it comes to small groups, perhaps on average 25 to 40% of people in a local congregation might be involved. And when they do attend a small group the degree of biblical study will be very diverse. Some might argue

that the Sunday morning sermon develops biblical literacy. However, given the great variety of topics addressed and the small amount of time a person might be exposed to such teaching on a weekly, monthly or annual, the impact seems spotty and haphazard at best. Adults may read their Bibles, but in the majority of cases I would suspect it is with a very minimal level of understanding, it tends to be selective (who reads Leviticus?), and there is little awareness of the text's original context. Some might argue that the cumulative impact of these diverse exposures to the Bible results in biblical literacy. However, I would respond by suggesting that this assumption is misguided. What does result is a series of disconnected impressions about the Bible, which tends to result in misperceptions regarding the meaning of the Scriptures.

I think many believers know about the Bible and have superficial acquaintance with its framework of ideas, but generally they do not have the capacity to study Scripture for themselves in systematic and life-changing ways.

Lest you think my evaluation is too pessimistic, let me share the results of a very modest survey that I conducted among Fellowship Baptist Church Leaders in British Columbia during September, 2012. This was distributed to about 200 church leaders and 33 responded – not a large percentage (16%). 50% of the respondents were lead pastors, the rest primarily associate pastors and a few children's ministry leaders. Only one youth pastor responded. Over half of the churches were larger than 250 people.²

1. 72% said that “developing biblical literacy within the congregation was an explicit part of their church’s mission and vision. This means that for at least 25% of these churches, biblical literacy is not a missional priority.
2. Approximately 70% said that the regular preaching of God’s word was the primary means for developing biblical literacy. So in these cases Christians get 30 minutes every seven days of exposure to Bible teaching with the expectation that in this process they will somehow learn how to read the Bible with life-changing understanding.
3. Only 55% make learning to read the Bible with understanding a priority in training new disciples.
4. It seems that small groups carry the weight for Bible Study in these churches (85%).

² A summary of the specific responses to each question is found on the biblicalliteracy.nbseminary.ca website.

5. However, only 50% put emphasis on developing the biblical literacy of small group leaders.
6. Less than 1/3 of the congregations promote any kind of annual Bible reading program.
7. Only 20% offer any kind of intensive workshops to teach people how to read their Bibles with understanding.
8. About 6% have a vision for using literacy training with the Bible as a text for outreach into their community.
9. 80% of the respondents assume as an operating principle that everyone in the congregation can read. This of course ignores the Canadian stats that tell us that 45% of adults between the ages of 16 and 65 have low literacy skills. 12% of young people in BC have difficulty reading the basic literary level. If people do not know how to read, how do we expect them to develop biblical literacy and advance in their discipleship?
10. Only 9% of respondents indicated that periodically they try to evaluate the average level of biblical literacy in their congregations.
11. Church libraries are not seen as vehicles to promote biblical literacy (only by 33% of respondents).
12. Only 21% of respondents indicated that their congregation had a “well-developed strategy to help people enhance their biblical literacy.”
13. 25% of respondents indicate they are training people to access specific online Bible study tools and resources.
14. 25% still offer adult Bible electives on Sunday mornings.

This is sampling of responses. I suspect that this profile, while not scientific in every respect, nevertheless indicates:

- a. That biblical literacy – developing the ability of Christians to read their bibles with understanding – while it may be part of a congregation’s mission, is not a priority in terms of discipleship programs within Evangelical churches.
- b. That most church leaders assume that people in the congregation can read and understand a text, when the assumption may not be true for perhaps one third of the people in the pew.
- c. That only 25% of congregations offer any systematic training in how to read the Bible with understanding.

- d. There is little vision to use literacy training for the community as a means to promote biblical wisdom.
- e. The weight for developing biblical literacy among adult believers is placed upon small group ministries, but the training of such small group leaders to read and understand the Bible for themselves only occurs in 50% of the congregations. This begs the question “to what degree small groups can in fact carry this expectation.”

Practical Steps local church leaders can take to elevate Biblical Literacy in a local church.

If the New Testament assumes an intimate connection between biblical literacy (the ability to access the God’s revelation, interpret it, understand it and apply it) and maturing discipleship, then we seem in many cases within Evangelical Churches to have lost this understanding or at best do not value it to the same degree.

What happens when we ignore the development of biblical literacy in our congregations?

1. Discipleship wanes.
2. Christian leaders are not developed effectively.
3. Youth tend to disengage with the church over time.
4. The connection between God’s program and our human lives becomes weakened and diminished. We no longer see ourselves in the context of God’s frame of reference.
5. God’s heart for mission fails to inspire us.
6. The ability of individual believers to function effectively within “the priestly kingdom” is diminished.
7. We perpetuate a culture of interpretative dependence upon the “pastoral experts” and fail to generate the kinds of disciples who can effectively populate the “priestly kingdom.”

Some practical steps that church leaders might consider to respond to this distressing trend might include:

1. Develop a definition of biblical literacy (or Gospel literacy if one prefers) that has a focus or orientation that you as a Christian leader can endorse, model, and promote. And then include in consistently and intentionally in your preaching.

2. Seek to locate biblical literacy as one of the means by which your congregational vision can be achieved, linking it with evangelism and discipleship.
3. Consider developing and offering once or twice a year a workshop in “Reading your Bible with Understanding” as one means to give visibility to this important skill and also modelling this “yearning after the wordy milk” of the Gospel.
4. Consider promoting some sustained Bible interaction once or twice a year across the congregation by coordinating a preaching series with small group studies, youth program and children’s ministry. This might be a study of some Psalms or one of the shorter New Testament books. It will develop good unity and create a bit of buzz and excitement in the congregation.
5. Put some emphasis in the small group leadership development on developing their ability to teach the Bible, by enhancing their ability to read and understand the Scriptures.
6. Periodically have someone offer a testimony that speaks to the impact of biblical study on their spiritual life.
7. Church website serves as a resource to guide people to worthwhile web-based resources to support the development of biblical literacy.

Appendix

Questions asked in the Survey about the level of biblical literacy in local churches and means being used currently to deepen or enhance biblical literacy as a means of discipleship.

1. Developing biblical literacy within the congregation is an *explicit* part of our church’s vision
2. In our congregation the primary enhancement of biblical literacy is through the regular preaching of God’s word Sunday-by-Sunday.
3. When people become believers in our church we immediately as part of their initial discipleship training help them learn how to read their Bible with understanding.
4. In our congregation we expect members to be involved in small groups where Bible study is a key purpose.
5. Our congregation vigorously promotes an annual “read through the Bible” program.
6. Our church leadership offers short, intensive workshops that teach people how to read their Bibles with understanding.

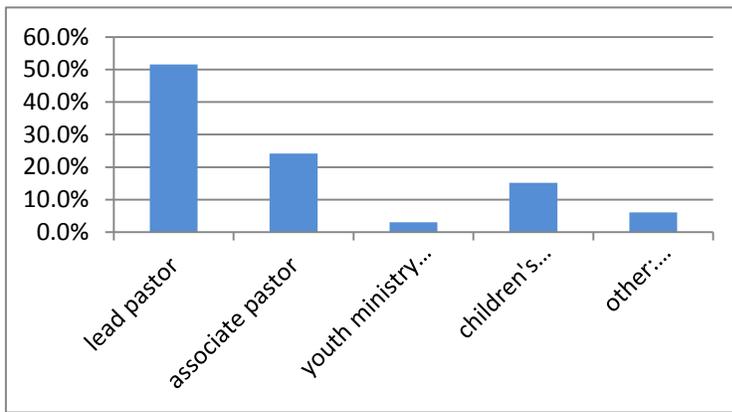
7. Our Children's Ministry programs select their curricula with a view to helping children develop biblical literacy.
8. Our church offers for the community at large a program in literacy development using the Bible as a key text.
9. In the training of small group leaders we put emphasis on developing their biblical literacy.
10. We offer a short "catechism" learning opportunity as a way to develop biblical literacy.
11. Our church offers English as Second Language training using the Bible as a key text.
12. We assume that everyone in our congregation knows how to read.
13. In our women's ministry the leadership offers specific Bible studies at least once a year for interested individuals.
14. We assume that everyone in our congregation knows how to read a text and comprehend its meaning.
15. We periodically try to measure the average level of biblical literacy in our congregation.
16. Our youth ministry curriculum uses creative ways (e.g. drama, multi-media, etc.) to develop biblical literacy.
17. We use our church library ministry as a primary means for promoting biblical literacy.
18. In our men's ministry one of the goals is to encourage men to read their Bibles consistently.
19. Our congregation has a well-designed strategy for helping people enhance their biblical literacy.
20. Given the multi-media devices available today, we explicitly encourage and train people to access the Bible using these tools.
21. We identify and promote helpful, biblically sound websites that people can access to develop their own biblical literacy.
22. In addition to the various ways of promoting and developing biblical literacy already mentioned we use the following means in our congregation:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
23. If a one day workshop of learning to read the Old Testament or New Testament with understanding were available, our church would desire to host it.

Assessing the Development of Biblical Literacy in Fellowship Pacific Churches

I am currently:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
lead pastor	51.5%	17
associate pastor	24.2%	8
youth ministry leader	3.0%	1
children's ministry leader	15.2%	5
other: _____	6.1%	2

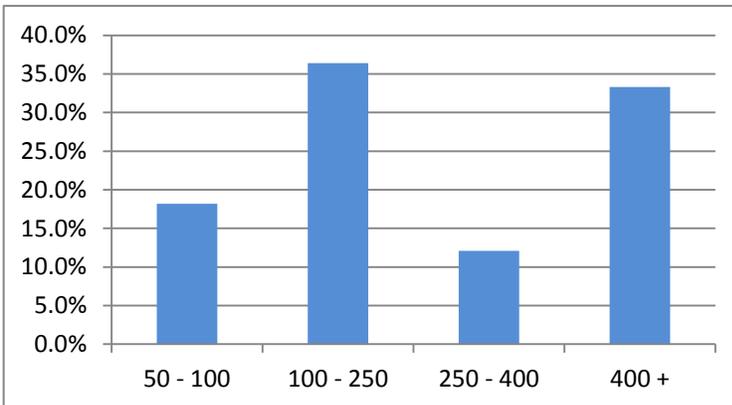
answered question 33
skipped question 0



The size of our congregation currently is:

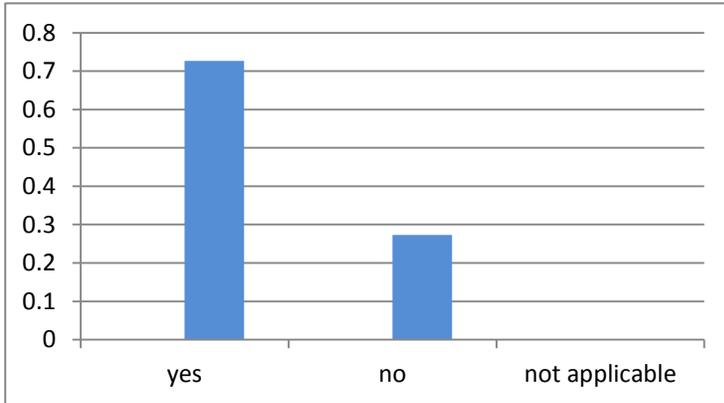
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
50 - 100	18.2%	6
100 - 250	36.4%	12
250 - 400	12.1%	4
400 +	33.3%	11

answered question 33
skipped question 0



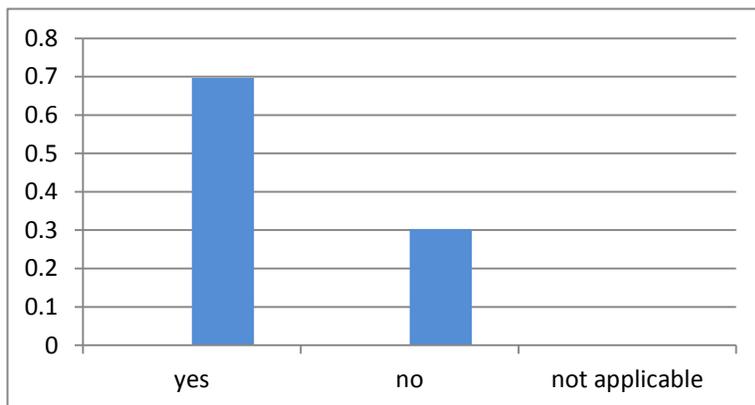
Developing biblical literacy within the congregation is an explicit part of our church's mission and vision.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
yes	72.7%	24	
no	27.3%	9	
not applicable	0.0%	0	
<i>answered question</i>			33
<i>skipped question</i>			0



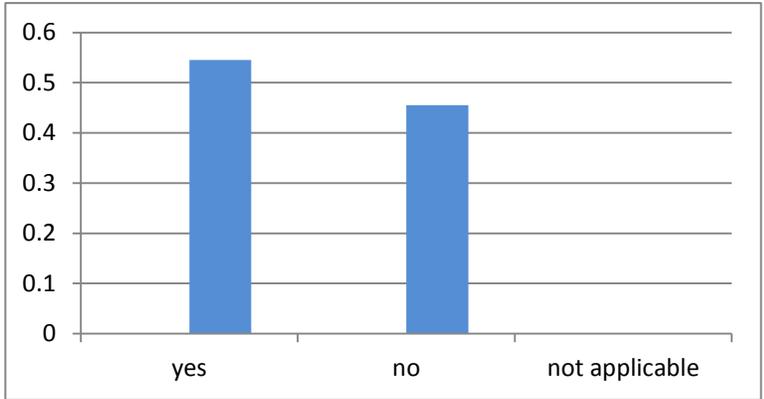
In our congregation the primary means for developing biblical literacy is the regular preaching of God's word Sunday-by-Sunday.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
yes	69.7%	23	
no	30.3%	10	
not applicable	0.0%	0	
<i>answered question</i>			33
<i>skipped question</i>			0



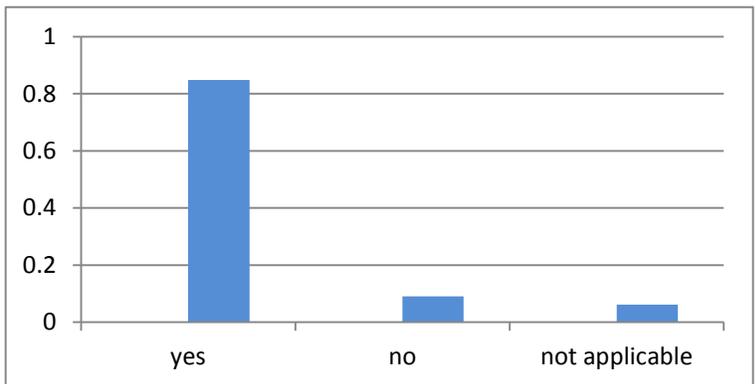
When people become believers in our church we immediately as part of their initial discipleship training help them learn how to read their Bible with understanding.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
yes	54.5%	18	
no	45.5%	15	
not applicable	0.0%	0	
			<i>answered question</i> 33
			<i>skipped question</i> 0



In our congregation we expect members to be involved in small groups where Bible study has a central role.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
yes	84.8%	28	
no	9.1%	3	
not applicable	6.1%	2	
			<i>answered question</i> 33
			<i>skipped question</i> 0



Our congregation vigorously promotes an annual "read through the Bible" program.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

Response
Percent

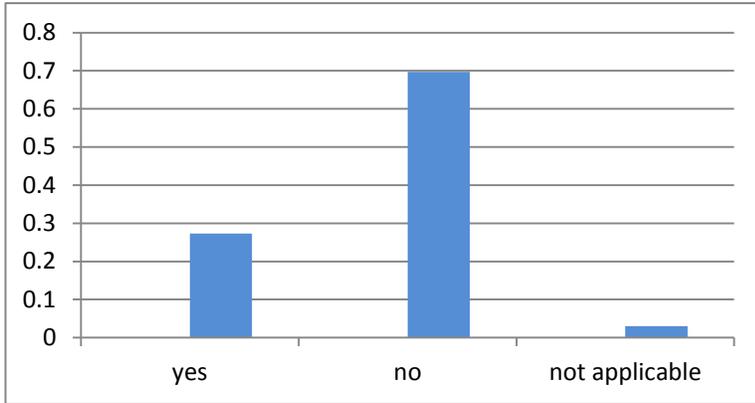
27.3%
69.7%
3.0%

Response Count

9
23
1

answered question
skipped question

33
0



Our church leadership offers short, intensive workshops that teach people how to read their Bibles with understanding.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

Response
Percent

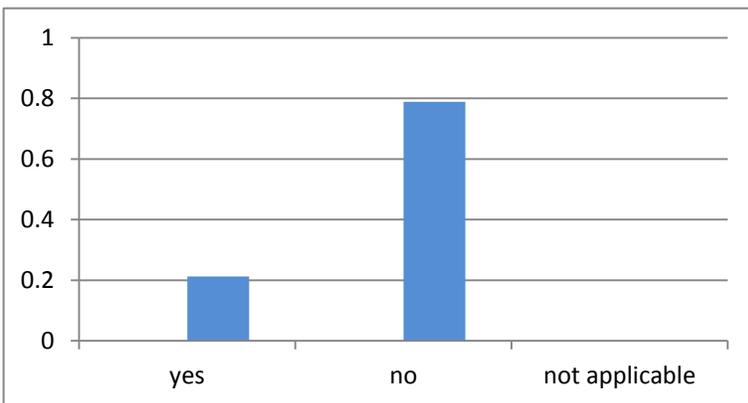
21.2%
78.8%
0.0%

Response Count

7
26
0

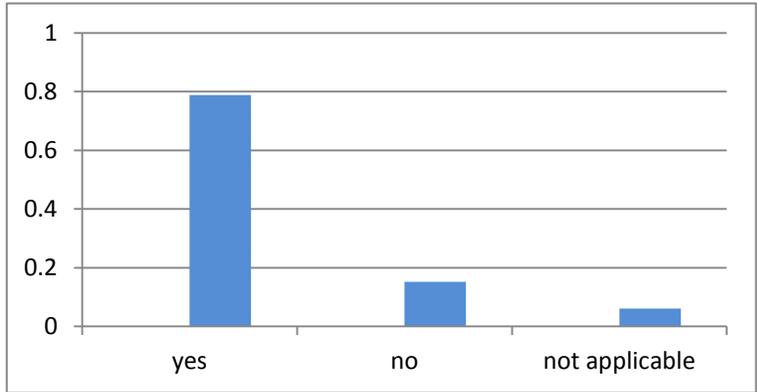
answered question
skipped question

33
0



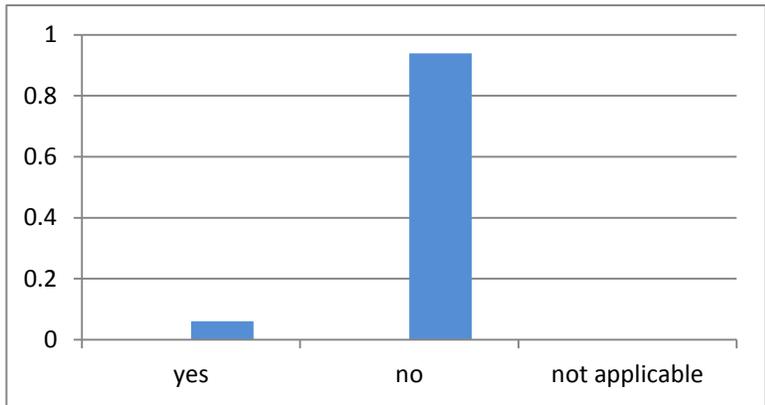
Our Children's Ministry programs select their curricula with a view to helping children develop biblical literacy.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
yes	78.8%	26	
no	15.2%	5	
not applicable	6.1%	2	
			<i>answered question</i> 33
			<i>skipped question</i> 0



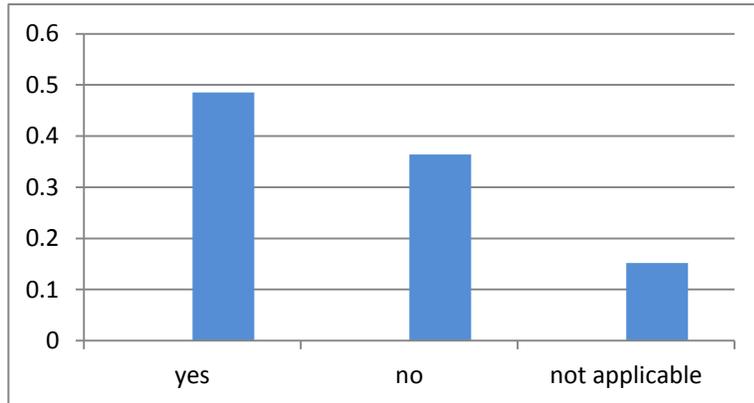
Our church offers for the community at large a program in literacy development, i.e. learning how to read, using the Bible as a key text.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count	
yes	6.1%	2	
no	93.9%	31	
not applicable	0.0%	0	
			<i>answered question</i> 33
			<i>skipped question</i> 0



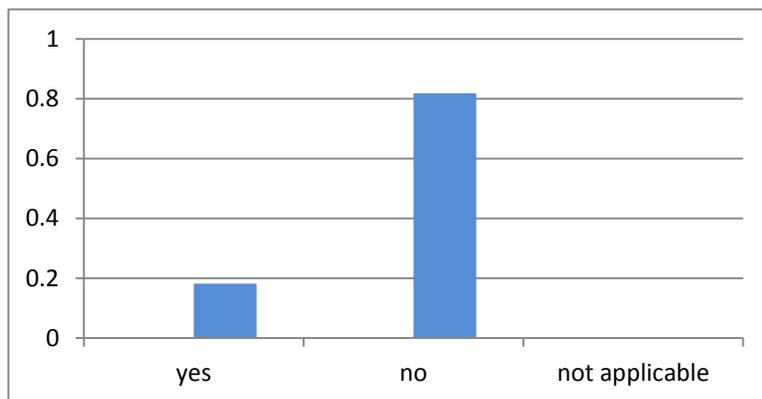
In the training of small group leaders we put emphasis on developing their biblical literacy.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	48.50%	16
no	36.40%	12
not applicable	15.20%	5
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0



We offer a short "catechism" learning opportunity as a way to develop biblical literacy.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	18.20%	6
no	81.80%	27
not applicable	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0

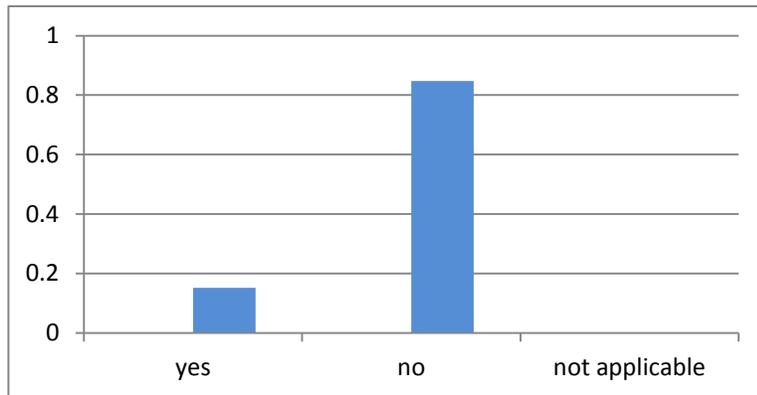


Our church offers English as Second Language training for the community using the Bible as a key text.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

Response	Percent	Response Count
yes	15.20%	5
no	84.80%	28
not applicable	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0

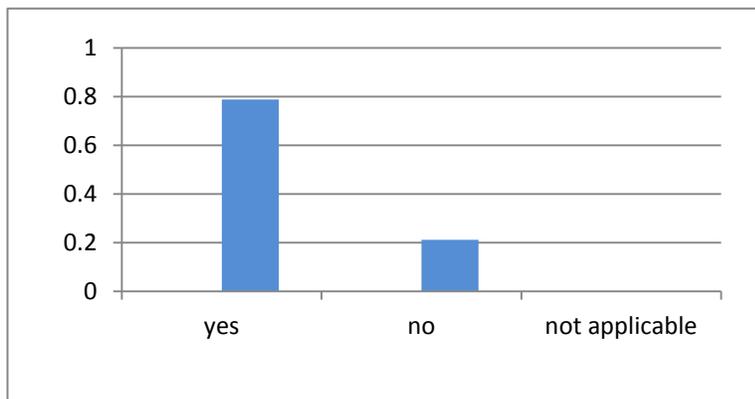


We assume as a ministry operating principle that everyone in our congregation knows how to read.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

Response	Percent	Response Count
yes	78.80%	26
no	21.20%	7
not applicable	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0

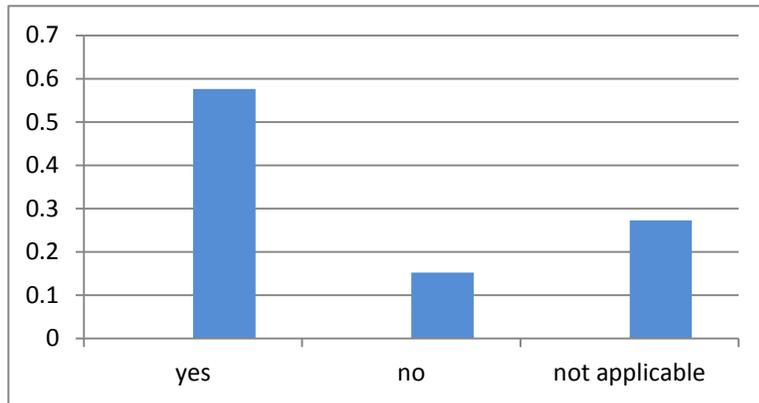


In our women's ministry the leadership offers specific Bible studies at least once a year for interested individuals.

Answer Options

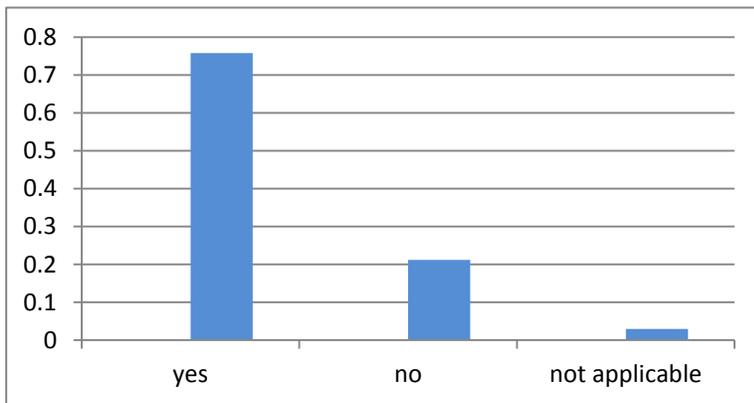
Response	Percent	Response Count
----------	---------	----------------

yes	57.60%	19
no	15.20%	5
not applicable	27.30%	9
	answered question	33
	skipped question	0



We assume that everyone in our congregation knows how to read a story in English and comprehend its meaning.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	75.80%	25
no	21.20%	7
not applicable	3.00%	1
	answered question	33
	skipped question	0



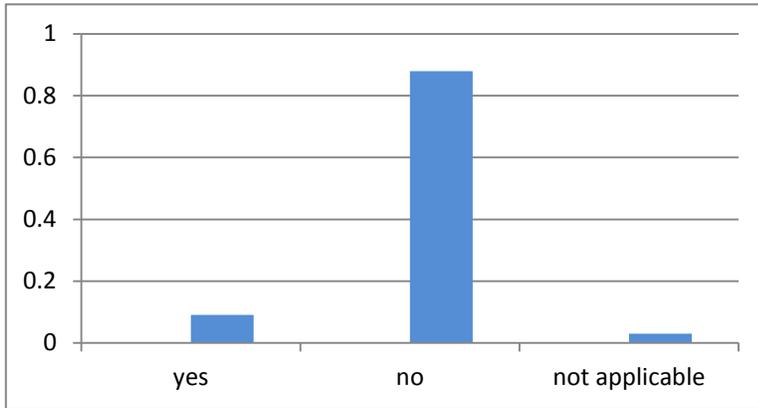
We periodically try to measure the average level of biblical literacy in our congregation.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	9.10%	3
no	87.90%	29

not applicable

3.00%
answered question
skipped question

1
33
0



Our Youth Ministry program in its curriculum uses creative ways (e.g. drama, multi-media, etc.) to develop biblical literacy among the youth in the congregation.

Answer Options

yes

no

not applicable

Response

Percent

Response Count

65.60%

21

18.80%

6

15.60%

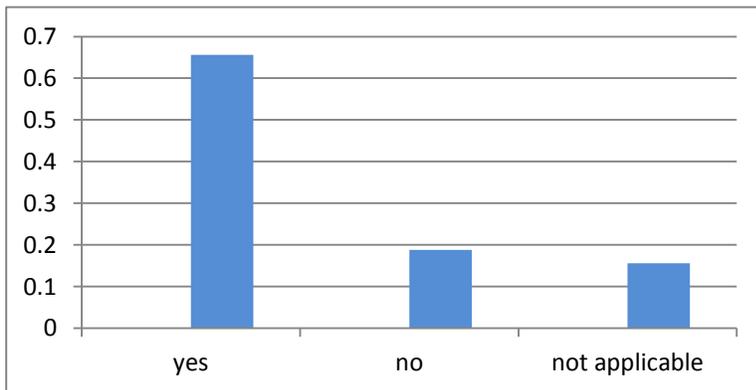
5

answered question

32

skipped question

1



Using various means we regularly draw attention in Sunday Services to the importance of biblical literacy for spiritual growth.

Answer Options

yes

no

Response

Percent

Response Count

87.90%

29

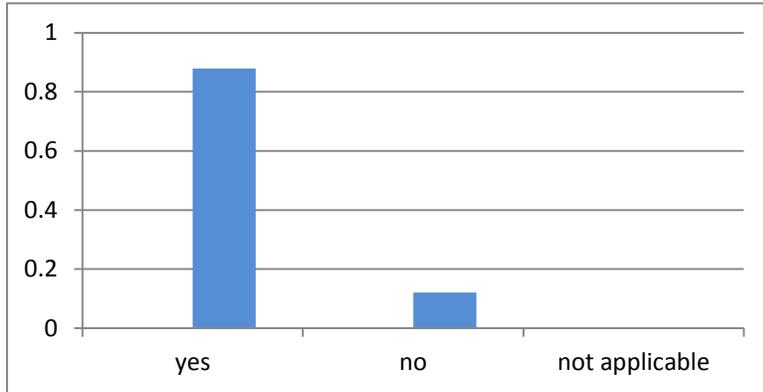
12.10%

4

not applicable

0.00%
answered question
skipped question

0
33
0



We use our church library as a primary means for promoting biblical literacy.

Answer Options

yes

no

not applicable

Response

Percent

33.30%

51.50%

15.20%

answered question

skipped question

Response Count

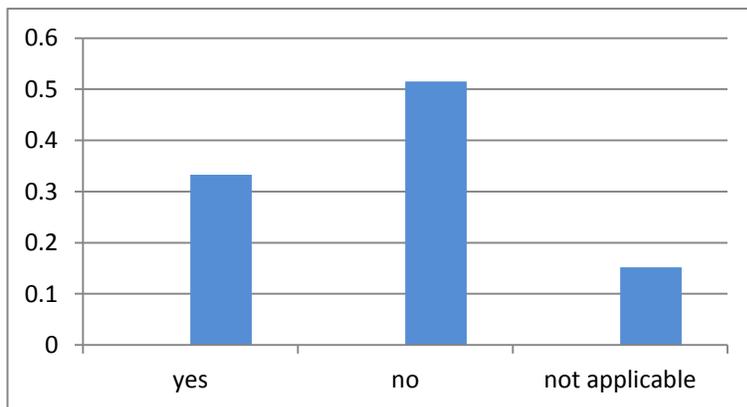
11

17

5

33

0



In our Men's Ministry one of the goals is to encourage men to read their Bibles more consistently.

Answer Options

yes

no

not applicable

Response

Percent

39.40%

15.20%

45.50%

Response Count

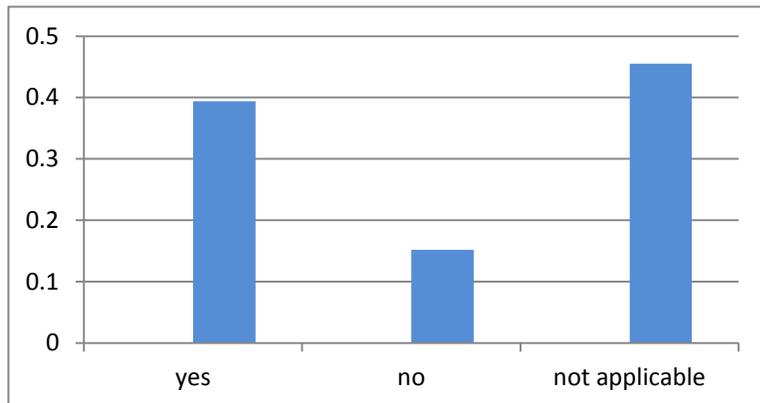
13

5

15

answered question
skipped question

33
0



We encourage children to memorize Scripture through programs such as "Camp by Memory," i.e. enabling children to earn bursaries for summer camp by memorizing scripture.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

**Response
Percent**

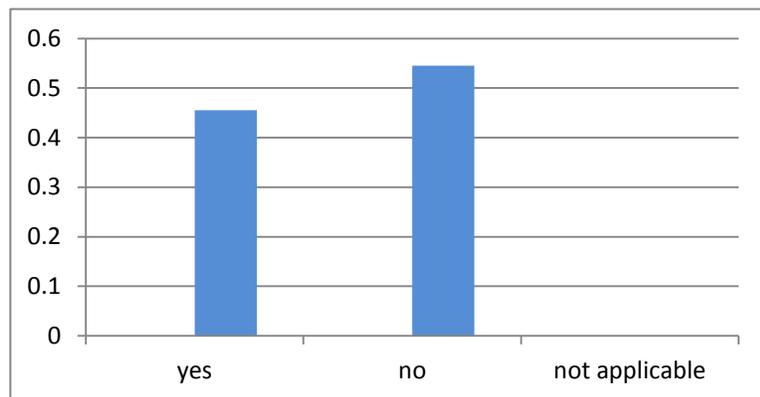
45.50%
54.50%
0.00%

Response Count

15
18
0

answered question
skipped question

33
0



Our congregation has a well-designed strategy for helping people enhance their biblical literacy.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

**Response
Percent**

21.20%
78.80%
0.00%

Response Count

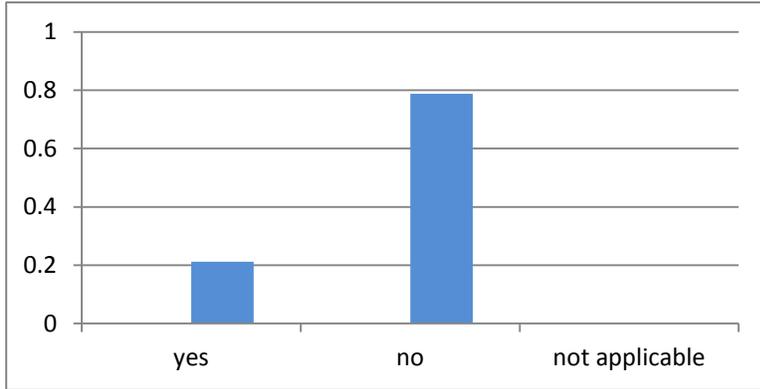
7
26
0

answered question

33

skipped question

0

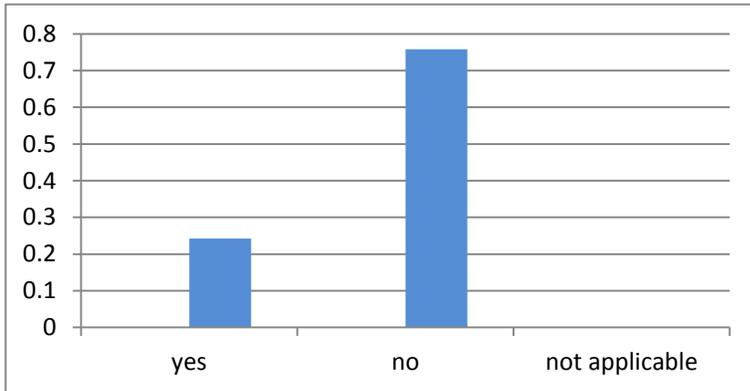


Given the multi-media devices available today, we explicitly train people to access specific on-line Bible study tools and resources.

Answer Options

yes
no
not applicable

Response	Percent	Response Count
yes	24.20%	8
no	75.80%	25
not applicable	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0

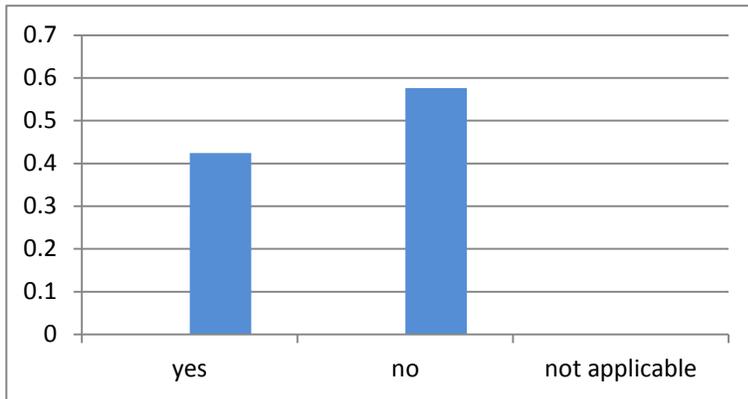


We identify and promote helpful, biblically sound websites that people can access to develop their own biblical literacy capacity.

Answer Options

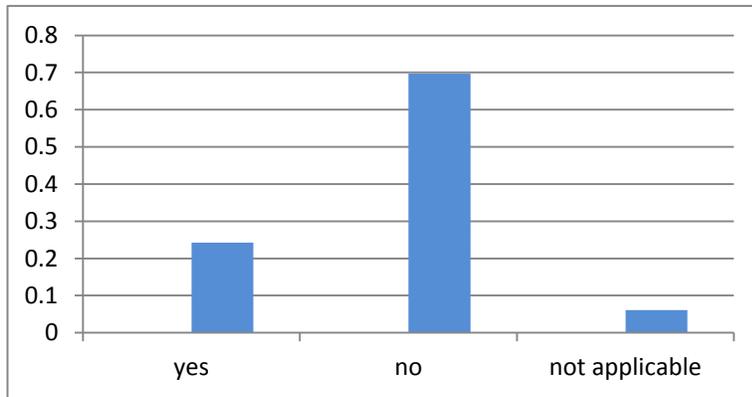
yes
no
not applicable

Response	Percent	Response Count
yes	42.40%	14
no	57.60%	19
not applicable	0.00%	0
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0



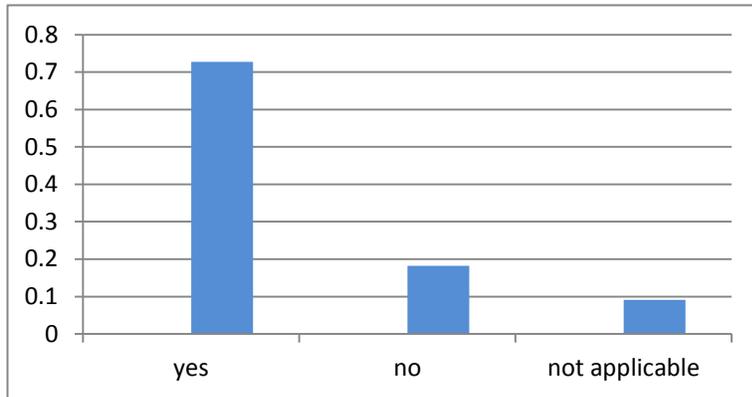
We offer adult Bible electives Sunday mornings as a means to develop people's biblical literacy.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	24.20%	8
no	69.70%	23
not applicable	6.10%	2
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0



If a one day workshop that equipped people to read the Old Testament or New Testament with understanding were available, our church would desire to host it.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
yes	72.70%	24
no	18.20%	6
not applicable	9.10%	3
<i>answered question</i>		33
<i>skipped question</i>		0



In addition to the various ways of promoting and developing biblical literacy already mentioned in this survey, we use the following means in our congregation:

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
		9
	<i>answered question</i>	9
	<i>skipped question</i>	24

Storytelling, culturally appropriate communication style for First Nations people.

X

We are just beginning to get 1 to 1 mentoring partnerships off of the ground. As part of that we will be teaching the partnerships the SOAP method of reading a passage of Scripture. S= Scripture (read the passage and write out the key verse that really jumps out at them from the passage) O = Observation (What do they observe in the text? What details or questions arise out of it? A= Application (how does this text specifically apply to them?) P = Prayer - write a 1 sentence prayer. We have found this method a solid way of reading a Biblical text in a devotional way.

The title of the survey suggests that a "no" response to many of the questions means that the church is not developing biblical literacy. My church, however, does develop biblical literacy of its people, but not through the means you describe. It sounds as though the assumption of the study is that biblical literacy is of utmost importance for the new believer...even over understanding of new identity in Christ. Our motivation and goal should not be biblical literacy, our goal should be discipleship...baptism into our identity with the Father, Son & Holy Spirit...as a result the disciples make disciples who go on mission and the purpose of being on mission drives us to the word to know it and be literate with the Bible, not as an end in itself, but a means to an end. Sorry, but I think the results of your survey will be completely irrelevant to the reality of biblical literacy in our Fellowship.

Some years we bring a special challenge -- i.e. "walk with Jesus this year" to promote the reading of the Gospels. We have a fairly recent initiative called "Sardis U" where we teach "Intro to OT" "Intro to NT" "How to read the Bible for yourself" etc.

Our members join small groups of 3-4. In those groups, they encounter content that develops Biblical literacy including a session specifically on how to read the Bible.[]

Our leadership development program offers something similar at a deeper level

Conferences

Adult SS is usually an examination of the scriptures. Preaching is always expository and encouraging the congregation to know God and His word more deeply is always stressed.

We have a comprehensive discipleship program that address this as well as intensive Bible training for those in our leadership training program.